

How to Make Money Writing for the Internet

By Christine Muir

Writing for the Internet can provide a good source of income if it is approached in the same professional manner as other writing projects.

The Internet is made up of millions of pages and someone has to write them. Why not you? Despite stories of writers working for low pay and producing low quality work for search engines, there are professional writing gigs on the Internet. Remember the low paying, low grade work is **not** your market and those producing such work are **not** your competition.

To write for the Internet you need:

- A website - this is your showcase. You do not need to have been published either in print or online. Write some short, concise articles (see below) and upload them onto your site. A website owner needs to see that you can deliver what you offer.
- An ability to write quickly, clearly and concisely.
- A wide general knowledge or a specialist niche topic.
- A Paypal account (easily set up) to receive payments
- A Copyscape account (see resource box) to check rewritten content is unique and find where your content is being used on the Internet.
- As with any form of writing, determination and a thick skin!

Finding paying markets.

In many cases writing Internet content does not pay as much as writing for mainstream print publications. This is balanced by the time it takes to write an Internet page against the research needed for a specialist print magazine. This is not to say that an Internet article should not be professional and read well, it is simply a different market.

You should approach writing for a website in a professional manner. That is, do your research, write a query, and hopefully your article, and deliver on time. In the course of your research you will find many sites where you have to enter a bid for a project. Generally, the lowest bid wins the project and going down this route makes it more difficult to break into higher paying jobs. This route is not recommended to 'build up your profile'; a website serves the same purpose. The following steps are a guide to finding professional, paying, Internet markets.

1. Write what you know.

Put a subject you are knowledgeable on into a search engine and look at the top ranking sites that come up. Note how professional they look, what information they give, the layout of the sites and the tone of the articles. Now go to the second or third page and do the same with those sites. You will probably notice that the lesser ranking sites have less information on them, i.e. less content. For example a high ranking house removal firm may have articles on how to be brutal when sorting out your belongings; a landscaped garden firm may have articles on different kinds of plants to complete the look. These articles will be approximately 350 words and contain **subtle** keywords or phrases and it these that give the site its search engine ranking. It is easy to find the appropriate keywords using free web tools (see the resource box). The skill is to insert them in a way that the reader is unaware of them. As a general rule, the keyword/phrase goes in the first sentence of the first paragraph, the first sentence of the last paragraph and once or twice in between. These requirements change over time so as an Internet writer you need to keep up to date using the free tools available. Remember, all of these articles will have been outsourced to a writer, so why not you?

2. Approaching the website.

After researching the site, list some articles that you think will be of benefit to the website owner, i.e. articles that give the reader a reason to stay on their site. Contact the website either through their contact page, email address or a 'contact the webmaster' link. Write a query stating that you have researched their site and how you feel that your articles will add value to it. Then list the article titles along with the relevant keywords. Finish the query letter with a link to your own website (see later) and the offer of one free article. As with any query, keep records of who you contact and the date. Internet writing works on a different time scale to print magazines so if you have not heard back within 7 days, write again, putting your free article in the body of the message if you want to increase your chances of getting hired.

3. Negotiate the contract.

If the website owner replies asking for more information with a view to hiring you, be prepared to deliver the articles quickly. To keep their site high in the search engine rankings, a site needs a constant supply of content to add to their site. Usually articles are bought in bundles of 5 or 10. They will expect these articles within 3 or 4 working days. You must deliver on time. If you cannot meet their time scale, negotiate another. If you do not deliver within the agreed time, they will not buy your articles. As a general rule, an Internet article will be around 300 – 400 words, contain one set of keywords and one subject. This means that they can be written quickly if you know your topic. They do not

require the same detail as writing for a specialist magazine. It is important that you keep this in mind if you are to make an income. Generally the copyright reverts to the buyer on payment as websites rely on unique content, so need to ensure the article won't turn up on another website.

4. Payment.

Setting the payment is often more difficult than writing the article! You should not undervalue your writing by setting fees too low, but also need to understand how much content a website needs and the budget available. If you are writing for an independent landscape gardener, it is unlikely they have the budget of a national firm. It is OK to charge different clients different fees. As a general rule, decide how much per hour you are willing to work for and how many articles you can write in that hour, but be careful of penalising yourself because you work quickly! For example, I set a **minimum** of £10/hour for myself. If it is a topic I know well, I can write 2 articles an hour, including 'editing' them. (I've been doing this for a long time!) However, I feel that £5/article devalues the skills I have built up over the years and I also have to allow for payment processing costs. So, for a basic key-worded 350 word article I charge the client a minimum of £15.00. If a regular client asks me for a subject that I am not familiar with I charge an extra 15% for research. So, a bundle of 10 articles is £150 (plus 15% if applicable). I usually agree to supply the articles within 3 working days, depending on my workload, but often deliver more quickly. Payment is usually made through Paypal within a few hours of the client receiving the articles. You must be prepared to work in US dollars as well as Pounds sterling; however Paypal will convert the amount for you to transfer into your bank, which takes around 3 – 5 days. For new clients it is not unusual to request 50% of payment in advance, with the rest on completion.

5. Follow up.

Once your fee has been paid, use Copyscape to see where they are being used and how they look on the website (it may take a few days for them to show). Once you have found them, wait 10 – 14 days then send the client a courtesy email stating that you hope they are pleased with the articles and if they require your services in the future to get in touch. Keep a client list of name of website, email address and the articles you wrote with the fee charged. If business is slow it often pays to contact your client list with a discounted bundle of articles. How much discount you are willing to give is up to you, generally 10% works well to tempt them back.

Other article selling opportunities

Some websites allow you to upload your own articles for sale. You set the price of the article and the site takes a commission on sales. This can prove a useful way of gaining an income from articles that you have not sold elsewhere. A sold

print article can often be rewritten into 2 or 3, 350 word bite sized articles, making full use of your research. Check with Copyscape when rewriting articles to sell this way to ensure that they are 'unique'. It is also possible to sell your own content from your own website. Advice on how to do this is freely available online.

By acting with the same professional attitude that you apply to any writing project, it is possible to find decent paid writing projects on the Internet.

Resources

Keywords/webmaster

tools www.googlekeywordtool.com

Copyscape www.copyscape.com

Paypal www.paypal.com

Website providers There are many on the Internet, it is a case of finding one that you find easy to use. A good example is www.sitemaker.com

Content selling www.dailyarticle.com

www.constant-content.com

www.payloadz.com (for selling from your own site)

Webmaster forums www.warriorforum.com

www.digitalpoint.com

Christine Muir is a a South Wales based writer, woolcrafter, dog & cat owner. Currently working on an historical saga set in early Roman Britain and mulling over the seeds for two, non-fiction testimonial style books.

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